

William "Bud" Matthews
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Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee
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Good afternoon, Senator Ashcroft, Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Bud Matthews and I live in Frederick, Maryland. I am 60 years old and have been the victim of home health care fraud. I appreciate the opportunity to tell you how these people have affected my life.

I want to start by giving you a little background. When I was eight years old, I was hit by a drunk driver. Since then, I have been paralyzed on the left side of my body. I need assistance with many of the basic tasks of my daily life. For many years, my mother was the one who took care of me. However, when my mother became ill, we hired a home health care worker to take care of both of us.

We got Patty through a service that places home health aides. Patty treated my mother like she was her own mother. She did everything for her. We trusted her and felt like she was a part of our family. Then, Patty brought her cousin Mark over to meet us. Since we considered her to be family, we were glad to meet him. Mark began to come over frequently to take care of me and I began to think of him like a son.

One of my mother's wishes later in her life was to have a rocking chair to sit in. When we were ready to buy it, I asked Mark to go upstairs and get my security box where I kept all my money and valuables. I took out the money and counted it in front of them. I never thought anything of it, because I liked and trusted them. Patty had once told me that Mark had a record but I didn't believe her because he was treating me so well. I thought someone must have just been trying to get him in trouble. However, I began to have some suspicions when my brother noticed that all the silver coins were missing out of his spare change jar. When my brother confronted Mark, he said he had "borrowed" it to buy cigarettes. He never paid it back.

Mark had many other ways to scam me out of money, a little at a time. He would wash my van and then ask if he could borrow \$20.00. Once when I asked him to hang a fan in my room to help with my asthma, he again asked for a \$20.00 loan. He never paid any of the loans back. Mark even went so far as to tell me that his mother had just lost a leg and he needed money to go visit her. I lent him the money because I felt bad for him.

When my mother died, Patty and Mark came to the funeral. My brother and I announced to the rest of the family that we wanted them to be part of our extended family. After that, Mark continued to come to take care of me. You cannot imagine the kinds of things that he did for me. Things that are private and humiliating, Mark did for me without saying a negative thing.

Shortly after my mother's death, my brother and I realized that my mother's wedding ring was missing. The ring was worth about \$10,000. My brother called Patty to confront her and Mark

about the missing ring. Patty said that Mark was very upset about being accused and they were coming over to our house. When he came over, Mark left the ring on the console in my brother's car. Then, he called after he got home to suggest we look in the car for the ring. Because I depended so much on Mark, I didn't want to believe that he would do something like that. So I continued to trust him, although we began to notice then that other things were missing. A tennis bracelet belonging to my mother was gone and my brother's suede jacket disappeared. I never thought it was fair to accuse someone of something if you didn't have any proof.

One day, I realized that Mark had gone upstairs and had been there a long time. The amount of time that he was up there was beginning to make me suspicious. When I asked what he was doing, he told me he was making the bed. The next day, after being upstairs for a long time, he came into the living room with an envelope full of money. I asked him where he got the money and he told me that it was Patty's. When I said I wanted him to get my box for me, he refused. I asked him again. He became belligerent and screamed, "You son of a bitch. I'm leaving and I'll never do another thing for you." He told my brother that I was so demanding that he could not work for me.

When my physical therapist came, I asked her to get my security box for me. When I opened the box, it was empty! Mark had taken everything---a silver dollar collection, worth about \$8000.00, my Masonic ring, which he pawned for \$550, and \$1000 in cash. Do you know how hard it is to save \$1000 when you are on disability? And now, I don't even have \$35 to buy an alert system to call an ambulance if I fall down.

Imagine then how I felt when the Police told me that they could not do anything for me. Thankfully, Judy from the Frederick Police Department's Senior Victim Assistance program said that she wanted to help me. At first, I told her that I didn't want her help because I couldn't trust anyone. However, Judy proved that she wanted to help me and now she is the only person in the world that I trust. With her help, the case finally went to trial. Mark was sentenced to 18 months in jail and 1 year probation. Patty, because she has two children, was sentenced to home arrest for 6 months. At the trial, I found out that Patty had a previous criminal record for doing the same thing to someone else.

And now for the first time, I am actually scared about my safety. I fear that Mark, Patty, or her husband, who has a violent criminal record, will come to my house and kill me. Since I can't get up to answer the door, I have to leave it open all the time. I ask my brother to pull the garage door down because I am afraid that Patty's husband will wait for me out by my van.

I am glad to be able to come here to tell you my story. These people ruined my life. Not only did I lose money that was so hard for me to save in the first place, I lost my faith in people. I can't trust anyone anymore. I no longer believe anything anybody says. Now, when my home health aide is upstairs changing the bed, I am so suspicious that I sit by the stairs to listen to what she is doing. To someone who has to rely on other people for assistance for many activities, this loss of trust is a terrible, debilitating thing.

One of the worst things is that now I feel a terrible emptiness. Mark and I used to work on my van together, one of my favorite pastimes. He was like a son to me. It is still too hard to believe that he stole from me. That will continue to beat at me for the rest of my life.

Since this happened to me, I have learned that many home health aide services do not require criminal background checks on people they are hiring to be home health care workers. I believe this needs to change so there is protection for people who put their trust in these caretakers for many basic things in life - including companionship. Now, I want to do whatever it takes to save people from having to go through what I did.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today.